

# CONGRESSIONAL LETTER

Submitted to the United States Congress on February 25th, 2002 by the MA Delegation

Dear Chairman Regula:

I am writing to call your attention to the great work, beneficial accomplishments, and unquestionable needs of the oldest and most successful Federal/State partnership in this nation, the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

The Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) serves 1.2 million people with disabilities annually. Last year VR helped over 235,000 individuals with disabilities go to work, earn real wages, and pay taxes that in a very short time far exceed the VR dollars spent on their behalf. Last year, people with disabilities who went to work with the aid of VR earned \$3.1 billion and paid \$905 million in Federal/State/local taxes.

Despite this impressive record of success and cost effectiveness, half of the states are forced to restrict the number of eligible persons with disabilities served, due to a lack of adequate funding. A modest investment of increased Federal and matching State dollars will have an enormous, positive impact on the lives of thousands of citizens with disabilities.

Last year, the members of the Massachusetts House delegation each personally requested that you include an increase of \$240 million in funding for grants to the states under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. However, once again, appropriations were set at a level no higher than minimally required under the law, \$79.6 million. This year, we are renewing our call for a substantial increase in funding for the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program. As unemployment rises and the employment options available to individuals with disabilities diminish, increased funding for vocational rehabilitation is a wiser investment and more desperately needed than ever.

Years of benign neglect have had a progressively deleterious effect on the fiscal health of this effective and enormously beneficial employment program for our most significantly disabled citizens. Continued disregard of the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program will soon have catastrophic effects on the program and on the people it serves.

We ask that you please consider favorably our request for substantially increased funding for the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

Sincerely,  
Edward J. Markey, Barney Frank, Richard Neal,  
Martin Meehan, John Olver, James McGovern